**National Press Release – to be released across India**

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**Swarna Bharat Party demands immediate revocation of the new rules regarding sale of animals**

Mr Rahul Pandit, President of Swarna Bharat Party, India’s only liberal party, condemned the recent Prevention of Cruelty (Regulations to Livestock Markets) Rules which prohibit the sale of animals that could be used for slaughter or religious sacrifice. These rules do nothing to prevent cruelty against animals but directly attack fundamental rights and the livelihood of millions of farmers and small traders.

Cattle have been used for food since the dawn of human history and millions of Indians consume cattle meat even today. Anyone who understands the rural economy knows that farmers sell livestock in markets either to meet urgent financial needs or to replenish their cattle with younger animals. Older animals that are unworthy of any further agricultural use are bought by traders for a range of purposes, including leather making and meat production.

It is these millions of poor farmers and traders, including Muslims and Dalits involved in the leather trade and small slaughter houses, whose livelihoods will be severely impacted by these rules. These poorer segments of the population have already been brought to their knees by badly managed demonetisation and decades of severe anti-farmer laws. At the same time, wealthy exporters will reap a windfall gain as farmers are forced to sell cattle to them at throw-away prices.

SBP opposes cruelty against animals during the slaughter process and is keen to work with the government to identify sensible options to deal with such cruelty. However, prohibition is not an answer.

Mr Pandit also pointed out that these rules are a comprehensive violation of the constitutional right to property. Even the British did not attack human liberties in this extreme manner. Further, these rules impose a mountain-load of administrative burden, with five copies of any sale transaction being required to be prepared. Undoubtedly, these rules will open the floodgates of corruption.

Moreover, millions of meat eating Indians will be denied access to cheap protein since even buffalo beef will be driven out of the market by these rules. Worst of all, these rules may boost the already uncontrolled violent activities of gau-rakshaks who are often implicitly supported by the BJP and its affiliates.

It is truly unfortunate that India’s socialist governments have arrogated such extreme powers to themselves. The government should always remain our servant, but the Modi government thinks of itself as our master and is now threatening to devour the livelihoods of citizens.

Mr Rahul Pandit demanded that Mr Modi revoke these rules immediately.

**Notes for Editors**

SBP is India’s only liberal party, committed to defending liberty and promoting prosperity.

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